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Obituary: Prof. Dr. Mamoun Fansa (27 August 1946 – 10 April 2026)

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It is with sadness that we bid farewell to Prof. Dr. Mamoun Fansa, who passed away on 10 April 2026. With him, we have lost a figure who, like few others, stood for experimental archaeology in Germany and Europe: as a researcher, museum director, networker, and committed communicator. For Mamoun Fansa, experimentation was not an “illustration” of the past but a path to verifiable knowledge, and at the same time an invitation to the public to take part in archaeological reasoning.



Mamoun Fansa

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Mamoun Fansa was born on 27 August 1946 in Aleppo (Syria). He came to Germany in 1967, a step that shaped his openness to changing perspectives and to intercultural mediation. Building on an artistic education (Diploma in Applied Painting at the University of Applied Sciences for Art and Design in Hanover), he studied Prehistory and Early History in Hanover and Göttingen (M.A. 1976). In 1979, he earned his doctorate with a dissertation on the pottery of the Funnel Beaker culture from the megalithic and flat graves of the Oldenburg region. The combination of a designer's sensibility and material-based research remained central to his later understanding of experimental archaeology.

After years as an art teacher (1972–1978) and work at the Institute for Monument Preservation in Hanover, in 1987, Mamoun Fansa moved to the prehistoric department of the State Museum for Nature and Man in Oldenburg (today: Landesmuseum Natur und Mensch) as senior curator. From 1994 to 2011, he served as the museum's director. In 1997 he was appointed Honorary Professor of History at the University of Oldenburg. Alongside this, he did work on the Neolithic period in Lower Saxony (including megalithic tombs and the Funnel Beaker culture) as well as on bog archaeology, focusing on trackways and bog bodies. His particular strength lay not only in researching these topics, but in making the logic of research transparent: What can be demonstrated, what remains a hypothesis, and how robust is a reconstruction?

His approach became especially visible in the exhibitions he conceived and initiated. The traveling exhibition on experimental archaeology that he set in motion between 1990 and 2004 became a key experience for many institutions and visitors alike: trying things out, failing, and testing again could be experienced as integral to archaeological knowledge. In this way he gave the field a shape that did not oversimplify, but made it intelligible.

Far beyond individual projects, Mamoun Fansa was a driving force within the community: he played a pioneering role in founding the European Association for the Promotion of Experimental Archaeology and served as its chair until 2008. The association became a platform for exchange, standards, and cooperation among universities, museums, archaeological technology, crafts, and volunteers. In doing so, he made a decisive contribution to establishing experimental archaeology as a serious methodological approach, and to integrating its results into academic discourse as well as educational work.

In his final years, Mamoun Fansa placed a particular focus on Museumsdorf Düppel in Berlin-Zehlendorf. From 2011 to 2016, he served as Chair of the Board of the Friends' Association Museumsdorf Düppel e.V., providing reliable drive, counsel, and advocacy for the institution.


He saw Düppel as an ideal place for what he championed throughout his life: testing archaeological questions on the scale of everyday life. As chair, he strengthened the link between research, public engagement, and volunteer work, and he worked to ensure that experimental archaeology remained visible not as a show, but as serious, transparent practice. He also played a key role in ensuring that Museumsdorf Düppel was preserved as a site. Together with members of the friends' association, he fought - successfully - against the closure of the site.


Mamoun Fansa combined scholarly rigor with an artist's eye. His legacy lies above all in having lastingly strengthened experimental archaeology as both a path to knowledge and a form of public engagement - in exhibitions, in networks, and not least at Museumsdorf Düppel. Many colleagues, companions, and students will remember him as an inspiring source of ideas and a convincing builder of bridges.

Our thoughts are with his family, his friends, and all those who were close to him. We will honor the memory of Prof. Dr. Mamoun Fansa.

Link(s)

[Interview: "I have never Done an Experiment in my Whole Life!" with Mamoun Fansa](#)

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